

Prabuddha Bharata

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प्राप्य वरांगियोधत ।

Katha Upa. I. iii. 4

Arise! Awake! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

—Swami Vivekananda.

VOL. XXIV]

SEPTEMBER 1919

[No. 278

CONVERSATIONS AND DIALOGUES OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

(RECORDED BY A DISCIPLE.)

PART II.—X.

[Subject—What thoughts are conducive to Atmajnana (self-knowledge)—the nature of mind and the way to control it.—An enquirer on the path of knowledge will rely on his Real Nature as the object of meditation.—Realisation in the state of Advaita.—The object of all the paths of Jnana, Bhakti and Yoga is to make the Jiva realise the Brahman.—The theory of Avatar (Incarnation).—Encouragement in the attainment of Atmajnana (self-knowledge).—The work of an Atmajnani (knower of self) is for the good of the world.]

Disciple.— Sir, to direct this uncontrollable mind to the Brahman is a very difficult task.

Swamiji.— Is there anything difficult to the hero? Only men of faint hearts speak so. Mukti is easy of attainment to the hero; but not to the cowards. Bhagavan says in the Gita, “By renunciation and by practice is the mind brought under control, O son of Kunti.” The Chitta or mind-stuff is like the crystal and calm waters of a lake and the waves which rise in it by the impact of sense-impressions constitute the mind. Therefore the mind is Sankalpa and Vikalpa (a succession of thought-waves). And from these mental waves rise desire. Then that desire trans-

forms itself into energy of action and works through the gross instrument of the body. Again as work is endless, so the fruits of work are without limit. Hence the mind is always being tossed by the endless and countless waves of the fruits of work. This mind has to be suppressed of all modifications (vrittis) and reconverted into the calm crystal waters of the lake so that there remains not a single wave of modification in it. Then will the Brahman manifest itself. The scriptural writers give glimpse of this state by such words: “Then all the knots of the heart are cut asunder,” etc. Do you understand?

Disciple.— Yes, Sir, but meditation has to be of some object?

Swamiji.— You yourself will be the object of your meditation. You are the omnipresent Atman—think of this and meditate on it. "I am neither the body, nor the mind, nor the Buddhi (determinative faculty); neither the gross nor the subtle sheath,"—by this process of negation, or of "Not this," "Not this," immerse your mind in the transcendent perception which is your Real Nature. Suppress the mind by plunging it repeatedly in this transcendent Intelligence. Then you will be established in the perception of the Essence of Intelligence which is your Real Nature. Knower and knowledge, meditator and object meditated upon will then become one and the cessation of all phenomenal superimposition. This is styled in the Shastras as the transcendence of the triad of relative knowledge (*Treputibheda*). There is no subject-object relation of knowledge in this state. When the Atman is the only knower, then by what means will you know it? The Atman is Knowledge, the Atman is Intelligence, the Atman is *Sacchidananda*. The subject-object consciousness has come upon the Brahman in his aspect as Jiva by means of that inscrutable power of Maya which cannot be indicated either as *Sat* or *Asat*. This is the state of normal human consciousness. Where this antithesis of relative duality becomes one in the pure Brahman, is indicated in the scriptures as the superconscious state and described in such words, "It is like a stilled mass of waters without a name and a form."

Swamiji spoke these words as if from within the profound depths of the realisation of Brahman.

Swamiji.— All philosophy and scriptures have come from the plane of relative knowledge of subject and object. But no

thought or language of the human mind can fully express any reality which lies beyond the plane of relative knowledge, and therefore it can never be the adequate channel of expression for transcendent reality. Science and philosophy are only statements of partial truth. So viewing from the transcendent standpoint, everything appears to be false—religious creeds are false—all works are false—the ego is false—the non-ego is false! Then is perceived that I as the Absolute am the only reality; I am the all-pervading Atman, the proof of my own existence. Where is the room for a separate proof to prove the reality of my existence? I, as the scriptures say, am self-established by the fact of my own eternal existence. I have actually seen that state, realised it. You also see and realise it and preach this truth of Brahman to Jiva. Then will you get peace.

Speaking these words, Swamiji's face assumed a grave aspect and it looked as if his mind remained absorbed for a while in some remote world of thought. After some time he again began to say: "This knowledge of Brahman which is inclusive of all thought, the *rationale* of all truths—realise this and preach It to the world. This will conduce to your own good and the good of others as well. I have told you to-day the essence of religious thought; there is nothing higher than this.

Disciple.— Sir, now you are speaking of Jnana; but sometimes you proclaim the superiority of Bhakti, sometimes of Karma, sometimes of Yoga. This confuses our understanding.

Swamiji.— Why I say so, do you know? The knowledge of Brahman is the ultimate goal—the highest destiny of man. But man cannot remain immersed in Brahman all the time! When he comes out of it

he has to do something. At that time he should do such work which will contribute to the attainment of the highest good by people. Therefore do I urge you to the service of Jiva in the knowledge of Brahman. But, my son, such are the intricacies of work, that even great saints fall into its net and get bound by it. Therefore work has to be done without any desire for results. This is the teaching of the Gita. But know that in the knowledge of Brahman there is no touch of any relation with work. Good works at the utmost, lead to purification of the mind. Therefore has the Bhashyakara so sharply criticised the doctrine of the coalescence of Jnana with Karma and has so much condemned it. Some attain to the knowledge of Brahman by means of unselfish actions without desire for fruits. This is also a means, but the real object is the attainment of *Brahmajnana*. Know this very well, that the object of the path of discrimination and of all other paths of Sadhana is Knowledge of Brahman.

Disciple.— Now, Sir, please satisfy my desire for knowledge by telling me about the utility of Raja Yoga and Bhakti Yoga

Swamiji.— Striving in these paths, some also attain to *Brahmajnana*. The path of Bhakti, or devotion to God is a slow process, reaches the goal in a longer time, but is easy of practice. In the path of Yoga there are many dangers; perhaps the mind runs after the path of Bibhutis or psychic powers and thus draw you off from reaching your Real Nature. Only the path of Jnana is of quick fruition and being the *rationale* of all other creeds is equally esteemed in all countries and all ages. But in the path of knowledge and philosophical reasoning there is the chance of the mind getting stuck in the inter-

minable net of vain argumentation. Therefore along with that meditation has to be practised. By means of discrimination and meditation, the goal of Brahman has to be reached. By practice in this way the goal can be surely reached. This, in my opinion, is the easy path ensuring quick success.

Disciple.— Now tell me something about the doctrine of Avatara or incarnation of God.

Swamiji.— You want to master the whole thing in a day, it seems.

Disciple.— Sir, if the doubts and difficulties of the mind be solved in a day, then I shall not have to worry you time and again.

Swamiji.— By the grace of whom, the knowledge of this Atman the glory which is spoken so much of in the Scriptures is attained in a minute, they are the living Gods—the Incarnations. From their birth, they are knowers of Brahman, and between Brahman and the knowledge of Brahman there is no difference. “He who knows the Brahman becomes the Brahman.” The Atman cannot be known by the mind for It is itself the knower—I have said before. Therefore man’s relative knowledge reaches up to the Avatara—one who is established in the Atman. The highest ideal of Ishvara which human mind can form is the Avatara. Beyond this there is no subject-object knowledge. Such persons, the Avatars who are established in the knowledge of Brahman, are rarely born in the world. Very few people can understand them. They are the proofs of the words of scriptures, pillars of light in the ocean of the world. By the company of such Avatars and by their grace the darkness of the mind disappears in a trice—and there is the quick awaking of *Brahmajnana* in the heart. Why and

by what process it arises, cannot be indicated. But it does arise, I have seen it arise. Sri Krishna has spoken the Gita established in the Atman. In those places of the Gita where the word "I" occurs, know it to indicate the Atman. "Take refuge in me alone," means, be established in the Atman. This knowledge of the Atman is the highest aim of the Gita. The mention of Yoga etc. is incidental to the attainment of Atmajnana. Those who have not this Atmajnana are "Self-killers." "They kill themselves by the clinging to the non-eternal," they lose their life in the bondage of the senses. You are also men, cannot you set aside these transitory enjoyments of two days filled with dust? Should you also swell the numbers of those who are born and

die in ignorance? Accept what is to the eternal good of the soul, discard the apparently pleasant. Speak of this Atman to all even to the lowest. By repeated speaking your own intelligence will be clarified. And always repeat these great texts, "Thou art That," "I am that," "All this is Brahman" and keep the courage of a lion in the heart. What is there to fear? Fear is death—fear is the great sin. The human soul in the form of Arjuna was affected by fear—therefore Bhagavan Sri Krishna established in the Atman spoke to him the teachings of Gita. Still his fear did not leave him. Later when Arjuna saw the Universal Form of the Lord, then established in the Atman with all bondages of Karma burnt by the fire of knowledge, he fought the battle.

OCCASIONAL NOTES.

THE writer of two articles in the recent issues of Modern Review passes under review the life, work and preaching of the Swami Vivekananda and takes "stock of his character and the ideas he stands for in modern Indian thought." In the course of it the writer brings together by quotations from different portions of the Swami's writings and speeches his views and utterances on the salient points of religion and philosophy and their application to modern Indian life. An interesting picture of the personality of the Swami has been drawn, characterising the many-sidedness of his personality, the elements that went into making, and by a selection of quotations, his teachings and specially his views on the subject of Indian life and ideals, the present social organism, its defects, limitation and abuses, and the

methods for their removal, have been brought together with a certain amount of comprehensiveness.

While endorsing the truth and justice of much of his views, it is on the question of his views on social reform, that the writer finds the Swami not only halting, but self-contradictory in his statements, but accuses him of spoiling the case of social reform by succumbing and pandering to the susceptibilities of the orthodox and conservative section of the community. And he is taken to task for not denouncing particular items of social abuses, such as the restrictions of intermarriage and inter-dining among the castes which would have been a capital achievement according to him. But when he speaks of liberty of thought and action and the breaking down

of exclusive privileges of caste, this is seized upon as a negation of all hereditary caste-distinction and placed by the side of such statements, "Preach neither for nor against caste or any other social evil, preach to let hands off and everything will come all right," "We preach neither social equality nor inequality, but everyman has the same right and insist upon freedom of thought and action in every way," is interpreted as a lapse and intended to placate by "smooth phrases and pleasing flatterings," the unreasoning and conservative section," in order not to offend them.

This conclusion the writer has been led to by his own ideas of social reform and endeavouring to foist them on the Swami's views and making him subscribe to them. Whether the Swami's view of social reform is right or wrong, whether it has produced meagre results according to his appraisement, if the writer had taken care to discover his method of work from his published writings, his express disavowal of the condemnatory, iconoclastic reforms of little bits of the mere outward mechanism of society he would have found that in trying to walk with him clinging to his own pet ideas of social reform he has an uncongenial companion and bound to come to a parting of ways. And above all he was not at all guilty of intellectual dishonesty and hiding or softening his view, to placate any section of the community, but if he was for movement, for growth from within, for expansion and development of our social forms in answer to a broader and more generous conception of life opening out before us, it was his considered, deliberate view of reform, whether right or wrong in the eyes of social reforms, and this imputa-

tion of intellectual dishonesty to him by compromising his views to soothe the susceptibilities of the orthodox is a concoction in the brain of a class of social reformers.

The Swami Vivekananda's idea of reform went to the deeper roots of social psychology and structure than only the outward mechanism and he desired to work at the foundations of social life to bring about a growth and expansion from within of social institution to include more fruitful, more generous viewpoints and a broader conception of life. The impulse, the motive power, the illuminating sense of the broadening out of our social forms he discovered and emphasised in the Vedantic idea of the solidarity of man and his inborn divine nature: Convinced as he was that the Indian evolution always progresses on a influx of spiritual impulse and surge of spiritual consciousness, that a spiritual upheaval proceeds all social unity and love, he stressed these motives to carry them to their deeper and wider issues. Social abuses are diseases on the body of the inner social soul and when the inner soul is strengthened and nourished by love, knowledge and spirituality will there be an effective removal of the social abuses. And in the name of liberty of action and thought, he did not attempt to dominate and dictate to society, by abuse and condemnation, "This way you shall move, not that;" this is a form of social tyranny, but he was convinced that fed by its own motives and originating impulses it would spontaneously find its own channel of social well-being, if once we get a response, a real movement of the soul to its own higher motives, the oneness and divinity of souls. If without this real movement and broadening out of

the mind as an effect of the working of the higher motives, he had merely dealt with the external phenomena of social organism, it would have served no good purpose but produced only irritation, resentment and recrimination and would have gone the way of all social reform based on abuse and vilification, viz. consignment to oblivion and the jubilation of the people at its death.

There is another view of social reform in which the Swami was very pronounced that reform does not mean the wholesale depreciation of institutions, their aims and motives and their replacement by forms transplanted from elsewhere, with different motives and historical traditions behind them. There is a class of intellectuals amongst us who see no good in the plan and purpose of Indian institutions whose only idea of reform is the wholesale destruction of the past and the replacement by brand-new institutions; who treat with contempt the idea that a people has a historically acquired character, a governing and dominating motive which constitutes its characteristic line of action; and they betray a impotent and imbecile mentality of a servile imagination of making Western institutions, however others may benefit by their influence and example, the universal standard of excellence and perfection for all. This was not the Swami's ideas, but he held that our institutions are good in their plan and purpose only, they have become narrowed in their activity and limited in functioning. He wanted to make them active instruments of social well-being where they have degenerated into egotistic self-centered living confined to themselves and claiming exclusive rights barring others from it. As he says:

" Our institutions are in their plan and purpose best suited to make mankind happy. There I tell you: ' You have done well, only try to do greater things. ' * I am no preacher of any momentary social reform, I am not trying to remedy evils, I only ask you to go forward and to complete the practical realisation of the scheme of progress that has been laid out in the most perfect order by our ancestors. I only ask you to work to realise more and more the Vedantic idea of the solidarity of man and his inborn divine nature! "

And this has to be done according to India's characteristic mode of being, from the direction of a spiritual motive. Here humanitarianism has to be effectuated by the service of human being as the image of God, as the worship of Narayana. Here social endeavour and communal activity has to be fostered and lived as a Yoga of work, as a means of union to Truth by spiritualising the significance of all works and objects as manifestation and expression of the Brahman. What is achieved elsewhere on the basis of positive philosophy have to be effectuated on the Indian soil as the service of the Godhead in the lowest human being as the worship of Narayana with all its spiritual signification. His whole scheme of social reconstruction was one of construction and he was content to work within the limits of present feasibility and wait for future spontaneous developments, which are sure to follow as the national mind broadened from within as effect of the higher spiritual motives and as their implications come on the surface.

Now let us discuss what the views of the Swami were on the question of caste and social reform as we have understood by study of his published writings and speeches. Caste in the sense of variation of the expression of social life is a healthy principle of growth of a vigorous community. A dull, dead uniformity of life,

action and thought among all the members of a community does not argue a progressive state of society. The greater the variety of life, the greater the richness, and the greater the manifestation of arts, crafts, industries, thought, philosophy, religions and the manifold activities of an expanding and opulent communal life. If the number of social groups were increased a hundredfold, it will be a gain instead of a loss, for then the richness and the manifoldness of activity in different departments of life will be increased a hundredfold. Classes and castes or the formation of men into groups have their genesis not in hatred whatever else it may have degenerated into, but in the operation of social forces making for variety, for a richness and manifoldness of communal life and activity. It will not be a blessing for society if all men began to act, live and think in the same, producing a dead uniformity of life, for that will be the road to stagnation and decay. Two forces are working in the formation of all social organism, one making for classes, forming men into groups with special aptitudes and power and contribution to the social economy and the other making for unity inspite of this vanity, bringing about a certain sameness of conditions which enables the society to throw out fresh varieties. It is in a balance and interaction of these two forces that the health and vigour of a community depend. If one of the forces gets very predominant and the other gets worsted, social diseases attack the body of the social organism. If the forces making for sameness prevails the stability and the variety of types is destroyed and the endeavour by trying to bring the higher down to the lower and instead of raising the lower up to the higher produces a certain low homogeneous

and lifeless uniformity and the rule of ignorant numbers prevails. If on the other hand, the social forces making for differentiation, for castes prevail over the other, the result is that crystallised and privileged social groups petrify appropriating exclusive privileges of spirituality, of intellectuality of wealth or physical advantages barring the doors of life in these respects to others who are thus kept down, and thus prevent society from throwing out fresh varieties which are essential for its vitality and progress.

The real sting of caste is not that men form themselves in groups living lives more or less varied and differentiated from others in some respects; for we know that differentiation is a present, root-fact of life. Men are not equal either mentally, physically or spiritually in capacity or powers. Men are born differentiated with different endowments of powers and natural capacities. These will necessarily create differentiation and variation of power, functioning and utility leading to the establishment of varied groups of men. It is neither possible nor desirable to destroy all variation bringing about an absolute sameness of external life and conditions giving rise to a uniform dead homogeneity so long as life lasts. Caste, therefore as a principle of social variation is inevitable and is never to be destroyed. Western writers have pointed out that even in Western societies, classes and castes exist, living more or less exclusive lives, that interclass marriage or inter-dining have to face a solid opposition of social opinion and rarely occur though theoretically admissible. Yet it does not prevent the classes from co-operating and working for the common weal.

But the real objection of caste is when this principle of variation overteaches itself, when social groups obtaining an advantage either in religion or culture or wealth, keep it to themselves and bar the door to others. This prevents the multiplication of forms and expression, formation of new groups, throwing out of new variation but the existent groups become crystallised and stereotyped, confining within them all culture and wealth or physical advantage, thus the general social organism bereft of them stagnates and decays. Like the shadow of death, inequality of advantage, exclusive claims and privileges follow the formation of classes in society and the struggle is against this. Indian society became decadent because it got worsted in the fight against privileges; and in the ages preceding the Mahomedan invasion, when the classes claiming exclusive privileges barred the door to others and thus the people lost their social individuality. The real fight against caste is not the breaking of groups and blending them into a uniform mass without any distinction which is impossible; an ideal condition which has been attained in no society; but the destruction of exclusive privileges and opening of the doors of life and equal chances to all to express his own individuality. Happily for us, through the stress of modern circumstances and awakening, much of these exclusive privileges have gone and much are going. In these days of printing and spreading literacy when the scriptures are open to the study of all and religious sadhana to the practice of all what is there to prevent the multiplication of new social forms by appropriating the culture and spirituality of the Brahman? When thanks to British regime, all the doors of life and the avenues of social advancement have been

opened to all, there is every possibility of advance in the social status by the acquisition of culture, knowledge, position and wealth. In our days some castes have advanced in social status in that way, some are even getting admitted into Brahmanhood. For each caste is autonomous with regard to itself and does not meddle with others' affairs and when it gets strong and calls itself Brahman, nothing can resist them.

The real task of social reform that is before us is to distribute the culture and spirituality and even material prosperity that had been the privilege of the higher castes and raise the social level of the general mass of people. For it cannot be denied that the masses of the people are yet devoid of Aryan culture and knowledge and worsted in the battle of life, are low in the scale of material prosperity and well-being. It is to this task that Swami Vivekananda exhorted his countrymen and specially the higher classes, not by destruction of social groups but by equalization of privileges and rights to help one and all to the lowest to attain to the rights and realisation of the four Purusharthas, Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha. This work of social service will be more productive of social well-being and more powerful solvent of the evils of caste than any dealing with such incidents as widow-remarriage, or interdining and intermarriage among a few members of higher castes. The Swami used to ridicule the idea of the prosperity of a nation advanced by the number of husbands the widows get, or that the breaking of caste means 'that all the people in a city should sit down together to a dinner of beef-steak and champagne, nor that all fools and lunatics in the country should marry, when, where,

whom they choose.' Restrictions among a number of men as to dining and marriage need not and do not stand in the way of love and estimation among the groups and social co-operation for the working of the social weal, as it does not among classes in other communities. If a number of men choose to interdine and intermarry among themselves, it concerns nobody but themselves, and does not affect the social well-being of other members of the community, so long as they do not claim exclusive privileges of culture, wealth or other physical advantage and bar others from it. As the Swami says:

"I have nothing to do directly with your castes or with your social reformation. Live in any caste you like, but that is no reason why you should hate another man or another caste. It is love and love alone I preach and I base my teaching on the great Vedantic truth of the sameness and omnipresence of the Soul of the Universe."

If caste has in later degradation become anti-social and a source of the idea of superiority, the corrective to it will be found in the Vedantic ideal of the solidarity of man and in the initiation and performance of social service and usefulness based on that idea among the classes and consequent feeling of bonds of love, unity in spite of the variation. But if without the real co-operation and initiation of works of social service and love, attack is only directed to particular items of external phenomena, the result will be the accentuation of the differences and discord among the classes which will only weaken and divide us still more. Therefore the Swami was against the denunciatory and condemnatory method of social reform, which has produced no result and made no mark. The Swami was therefore not directly concerned whether hereditary caste will remain or go, but his endeavour was

to set in operation the real forces of social well-being and let them work and change the forms of social life as the awakened consciousness of the people may demand. But with the work of love, helping each and all classes and individuals to attain the four Purusarthas of life, the social level of the classes and masses will be raised, there will be multiplication of new forms of social expression, and ultimately in a more vigorous, self-confident and expanding state of social consciousness, the social forms themselves to which the social reformers are opposed may become more flexible.

In some moods the Swami spoke of :

"The idea of caste is the greatest dividing factor and the root of Maya—all caste, either on the principle of birth and merit is bondage;" this is seized as a flatly contradictory to his more qualifying statements, 'I am neither a mere caste-breaker nor a social reformer.' 'Live in any caste you like, but that is no reason why you should hate another caste.'

The real transcendence of caste-consciousness and of all differentiation between man is not a question of the mechanism of social life but an inward growth, an attainment of a spiritual vision. It implies the reaching of a plane of spiritual realisation, when the Unity or Brahman is perceived through the varied forms of external life. It is the *Samadarshitvam*, spoken of in our scriptures when the same God is seen as present in the high or low, in the wise and ignorant, in the pure and the impure, in spite of the apparent differentiation, inequality that appears on the surface. The work of this unifying principle in all social lives, is the elimination of privilege and equalising of the chances of life, thus working towards sameness and unity without

destroying variety. The way some speak that this transcendence of caste-consciousness is a present fact in their consciousness and only with the abolition of a few restrictions, they will cease to discriminate between man and man, feel equal love for all, high or low, ignorant or wise, a saint or sinner, shows that they do not know their minds. Their professions will be sorely tested if applied to the inequalities of life. The fact is that through all these social forms, by the exercise of love, charity and by service, we are growing into that vision of spiritual unity when we will feel equal love for all inspite of apparent difference on the surface. This is the real plan and purpose of the Indian scheme of social life "as meant for raising all humanity slowly and gently towards the realisation of the spiritual man, who is same-sighted, calm, steady, worshipful pure and meditative." All variety and differentiation will die down and there will be absolute unity in society when mankind will attain his highest spiritual level, "when men will be born with spiritual

inheritance, when the physical power will be abolished, when love will reign in the world and prompt all human actions." Then all variety will be abolished, there will be only the Brâhman, the man of God, same-sighted, calm, non-resisting and pure. This is the *Satyayuga* of the ancient Rishis and we should work for that and that scheme of life which providing scope for the attainment of *dharma, artha, kama, moksha*, helps in the breaking of caste in the attainment of real Brahmanhood by all must be accepted by man as helpful for his advancement and well-being. Therefore if 'Hindu admirers' of Swami Vivekananda will find new ways of social service among the classes, new avenues of social usefulness and devote themselves to the work of helping the classes and masses to the attainment of *dharma, artha, kama, moksha*; of material prosperity, knowledge and spirituality instead of trying to blend all people into a homogeneous mass, an ideal realised in no society, it will be more powerful a solvent of the evils of caste than any dealing with external phenomena.

PLATO AND VEDANTA.

IN Indian philosophical monthlies the contemporary Indian mind seems to be unusually interested in Hegel, in fact, much more, than any other western philosopher—unless it be Arthur Schoepenhaur. But since the philosophy of the occident derives its inspiration and subtlety mostly from the Greecian thinkers it would be profitable if we compare some of them with the philosophers of India.

Of all the philosophers of the west ancient or modern, Plato undoubtedly would attract most attention. In truth the

world of philosophy to-day has one of these two interests in Plato: namely (1) if half the world proves Plato, the (2) other half spends its time in disproving him. And after all when you to come to Plato you really are at the source of the best thought of the occident. When you drink Plato's wisdom you are drinking at the source from a fountain and not from a cup.

Since here we are interested in making a short comparison between Plato and Vedanta let us take up this task point by point. First of all we shall compare

Plato's ethics; that is to say compare his theory of freedom with that of Vedanta. And lastly we shall see if the Vedantic Absolute at all differs from the Platonic God.

That we should take up Plato's ethics first is a very necessary step. To our mind Plato was primarily interested in ethical speculations. (The Republic is but a treatise on Justice; add to that Euthropo, Lachis, Protogoras, Sophists, Gorgias, Apology, Crito and Phædo.) And this has its reasons. Plato, to remind ourselves, came to Athens when the Attic civilisation had pretty nearly passed its crest. Pericles was dead when Plato grew up. Socrates was sentenced to death which hurt every lover of true civilisation. And what was worse Athens was overrun by the Spartans. All the nobility of the Athenian life seemed suddenly to have been shaken and impaired for ever. "Virtue came to decadence and vice appeared to be ascendent." At such a critical time Plato came to Greece as an Avatar. And his most important task lay in the moral and spiritual rejuvenation of Athens. That made his task primarily ethical and not merely intellectual.

According to Plato this world is a world of good and evil. You cannot destroy the one without destroying the other. [Thecetus] "Evils, Theodorus, can never perish; for there must always remain something antagonistic to good." The only escape from good and evil is to "become like God.....and to become like Him is to be holy, just and wise." For "in God there is no unrighteousness. In fact He is the greatest righteousness"—Summum Bonum. The preceding goes to show that to Plato God is all goodness. And he who is good is near to God.

In the above one sees a resemblance as

well as difference between Plato and Vedanta. He agrees with the Vedantic thinkers that good and evil are relative, and belong to this world Maya. And yet one must strive after goodness for in that direction lies man's escape from evil.

On the contrary Vedanta proposes a different form of escape from evil. तद्वा कर्मफलासङ्गस्त्—"forsaking the clinging to fruits of action," man must free himself from the share of earthlife, says the Bhagavad Gita, and it along with the Upanishads forms the keystone of the edifice of Vedanta.

One might ask why Vedanta emphasises the fact that in order to avoid evil one must rise above both good and evil. The reason for that is simply the truth that good and evil being the ones of a pair of opposites one can not escape fully from one of them without rising above both. [Gita Chap. 7-27 and 28.] And the the only way to do that is by renouncing desires and fruits of action. Of course Vedanta agrees with Plato that freedom from evil lies in being just, good and righteous; but (Vedanta goes further) full freedom is possible only when man has gone beyond goodness and righteousness. In other words Plato preaches partial freedom for the soul while Vedanta stands for complete liberation. This is no doubt due to the fact that Plato's God, is not *Gunatita*, while the Vedantic Brahman is beyond all Gunas. Since we shall take this point up later let us compare Plato's Ethics with Vedanta a little more. In the following two quotations we find that Plato's moral earnestness is just as great as that of the Vedantic mind:

"Which has the greater share of truth pleasure or wisdom? Surely wisdom; for pleasure is the veriest imposter in the world. Which of symmetry?

Wisdom again, for nothing is more immoderate than pleasure. . . . Which of beauty? Once more, wisdom, for pleasure is often unseemly, and the greatest pleasures are put out of sight.¹ Not pleasure then ranks first in the scale of Good, but measure and eternal harmony. Second come the symmetrical, the beautiful and the perfect. Third, mind and wisdom." [Philebus.]

Compare with the above the following from the Maitrayana Upanishad [Muller's Tr.] "What is the use of enjoyment of pleasure in this unsubstantial body? What is the need of the enjoyment of this body which is assailed by lust, hatred, greed, jealousy, hunger, thirst and old age? We see that all is perishable. Great oceans have been dried, mountains have fallen, even pole-stars have moved; in such a world what is the use of the enjoyment of pleasures?"

If one asks why Plato scorned the pleasures of life as the Vedantists did, the answer is that Plato held (Gorgias, 492) "our life here is after all a death, our body is the tomb or prison of our soul." And the escape from this prison of life for Plato lies in being good and just, for God is perfect goodness in Himself. [Republic ii].

To sum the above up we should say that man's freedom from pain and evil consists in direct proportion of his realising and becoming God. The same is, though in a different manner, the crux of Vedanta.

Let us now take up the problem of good and evil as Vedanta looks at it. "Whence then springs the individual soul with its good and evil? Are not God and the Soul same?" The answer is "when, by the teaching of non-separateness, the consciousness of non-separateness is awakened,

then the wandering of the soul ceases; for the whole tendency of the world of division springs from falsehood and is removed by perfect knowledge." All separateness "arises from the non-discrimination of the determinations." [Sutras 472, 14-475, 4 Sec, Deussen's tr.]. Vedanta wants to emphasise that as long as there is harmony between the individual and the whole there is no evil. The moment the soul is separated from the life of the Absolute it suffers from evil. Good is knowledge that harmonises the Whole and the individuals. Since the highest harmony between Brahman (the Whole) and the individual is the identity of the two, he who has become one with Brahman is truly free from both evil and good. In the Absolute Brahman there is no evil, for he is the Summum Bonum and more [Sacchidananda or infinite knowledge— infinite existence—infinite bliss.]

The amazing point here is that the Vedantic Absolute God is beyond Good, and is infinite. While the Platonic God is Good and finite. The Vedantic theory of practical life is more or less the same as Plato thinks of in the Republic. There are precepts and ideas in the Gita and the earlier treatises: namely, the Brahmanas and the Samhitas that cover the whole gamut of the Platonic thought on this head.

And if the Vedantic thinkers ascribe the origin of evil to man's separateness from Brahman, Plato ascribes it to ignorance (Laws, Book IX). And if Vedanta proposes to cure us of evil by urging us to know and become Brahman, Plato proposes the knowledge of Goodness which is God and the realisation thereof as the only remedy. Though we have already pointed out how Vedanta goes beyond Plato in this yet it will be useful to point

out their resemblance as we have done in the preceding sentences.

No doubt the most striking difference between Vedanta and Plato lies in their respective conceptions of God. "God," says Plato "as the old tradition declares, holding in His hand the beginning, middle, and end of all that is, moves according to His nature in a straight line towards the accomplishment of His end. Justice always follows Him." (Laws X). And "He is One in contrast with the Infinite." (Aristotle). On the side of resemblance then Plato's God is One as the Advaita Brahman of Vedanta. Yet life is not infinite which is the very nature of the Absolute according to Vedanta. Again Plato's God is not Gunatita; but the Brahman always is. Thus as in ethical ideals Vedanta has its differences from Plato so are there differences between the Platonic God and Brahman. The Plato-

nist strives for goodness in order to realise his God; the Vedantist strives for goodness and then beyond—goodness—desirelessness—in order to attain Mukti. Plato gives us partial freedom; while Vedanta gives us full freedom, unlimited and infinite. That of course is due to the fact that we have been worshipping a bigger Absolute these thousands of years. And to-day after these four years of war when "the world" is being made "safe for Democracy" and freedom let us not forget the fact that Vedanta alone can contribute to the world that true freedom, which it alone possesses, and without which civilisation will lapse into barbarism. It is not partial freedom, but full liberation—the Amrita of Nirvana—that India can give the world; not self-realisation, but the realisation of selflessness!

DHAN GOPAL MUKHERJI.

EPISTLES OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

(Translated from Bengali.)

CLIII.

4th October, '95.

C/o. E. T. Sturdy Esq.

High View, Caversham, Reading.

My dear —

You know that I am now in England. I shall stay here for about a month and go back to America. Next summer I shall again come to England. At present there is not much prospect in England, but the Lord is omnipotent. Let us wait and see. * *

It is impossible for — to come now. The thing is, the money belongs to Mr. Sturdy, and we must have the kind of man he likes. Mr. Sturdy has taken initiation from me, and is a very enterprising and good man.

In the first place, we want a man who has

a thorough mastery of English and Sanskrit. It is true that — will be able to pick up English soon should he come here, but I am as yet unable to bring men here to learn. We want them, first, who will be able to teach. In the second place, I trust those that will not desert me in prosperity and adversity alike. * * The most trustworthy men are needed, then, after the foundation is laid, let him who will come and make a noise, there is no fear. — gave no proof of wisdom in being carried away by a hubbub and joining the party of those charlatans. Sir, granted that Ramakrishna Paramahamsa was a sham, granted that it has been a very serious mistake, indeed, to take refuge in him, but what is the way out now? What if one

life is spent in vain, but shall a *man* eat his own words? Can there be such a thing as having a dozen husbands? Any of you may join any party you like, I have no objection, no, not in the least, but travelling this world over, I find that save and except his circle alone, everywhere else thought and act are at variance. In those that belong to him, I have the utmost love, the utmost confidence. I have no help in the matter. Call me one-sided if you will, but there you have my *bona fide* avowal. If but a thorn pricks the foot of one who has surrendered oneself to Sri Ramakrishna, it makes my bones ache, all others I love. You will find very few men so unsectarian as I am, but you must excuse me I have that bit of bigotry. * * If I do not appeal to his name, whose else shall I? It will be time enough to seek for a big Guru in our next birth, but in this, it is that unlearned Brahman who has bought this body of mine forever.

I give you a bit of my mind, don't be angry, pray. I am your slave so long as you are his, — step a hair's breadth outside that and you and I are on a par. All the sects and societies that you see, the whole host of them, inside the country or out, he has already swallowed them all, my brother. "मर्यादेन निहताः पूर्वमेव निमित्तमात्रं भव सत्यसार्थिन्" [These have verily been killed by Myself long ago, be only the instrument, O Arjuna.] To-day or to-morrow they will be merged in your own body. O man of little faith! Through his grace "ब्रह्मारणं गोप्यदायते" [The whole universe becomes a hoof-mark of the cow.] Be not traitors, that is a sin past atonement. Name, fame, good deeds, यज्ञुहोषि, यज्ञस्वति, यदशनस्ति &c. [Whatever sacrifices you perform, whatever penances you undergo, whatever you eat,]—surrender everything to his feet. What on earth do we want? He has given us refuge, what more do we want? Bhakti is verily its own reward—what else is needed? My brother, he who made men of us by feeding and clothing and imparting

wisdom and knowledge, who opened the eyes of our self, whom night and day we found the living God,—must we be traitors to him!!! And you forget the mercy of such a Lord! The lives of Buddha and Krishna and Jesus are matters of ancient history, and doubts are entertained about their historicity, and you inspite of seeing the greatness of Sri Ramakrishna's life in flesh and blood sometimes lose your head! Fie upon you! I have nothing to say. His likeness is being worshipped in and out of your country, by godless and heartless men, and you are stranded at times on disbelief!! In a breath he will create for himself hundreds of thousands of such as you are. Blessed is your birth, blessed your lineage, and blessed your country that you were allowed to take the dust off his feet. Well, I can't help. He is protecting us, forsooth,—I see it before my eyes. Insane that you are, is it through my own strength that beauty like fairies, hundreds of thousands of rupees, lose their attraction and appear as nothing to me? Or, is it he who is protecting me? He who has no faith in him and—no reverence for him, will be a down-right loser, I tell you plain.

* * H— has written about his troubled circumstances, and says he will be dislodged from his home soon. He has asked for some lectures, but I have none at present, but have still some money left in my purse which I shall send him. So he need not be afraid. I could send him by return of post, but I suspect that my money miscarried, therefore I postpone it. Secondly, I know, besides, of no address to send it to. I see the Madrasis have failed to start the paper. Practical wisdom is altogether wanting in the Hindu nation, I see. Whenever you promise to do any work, you must do it exactly at the appointed time, or people lose their faith in you. Money matters require a speedy reply. * * If — be willing, tell him to be my Calcutta agent, for I have an implicit faith in him and he

understands a good deal of these things, it is not for a childish and noisy rabble to do it. Tell him to fix upon a centre, an address that will not change every hour and to which I shall direct all my Calcutta correspondences.....Business is business. * *

Yours &c.
Vivekananda.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA.

(An address delivered at the Ramakrishna
Birthday Celebration, Nagpur.)

Brothers,

We have met here this evening to celebrate the 82nd Birthday of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa Deva, who is well known to the world at large, as the Master of Swami Vivekananda, and who to the devoted body of his followers is little short of an "Avatar." I should at the very outset make it clear to you, that my interest in Sri Ramakrishna is simply that of an impartial, earnest and respectful student of comparative religion, and as I happen to be much interested in the study of our various philosophic systems—and particularly in that of the Vedanta—I could not but feel attracted to a new exposition of that philosophy, for Vedanta, gentlemen, forms the background of what was said or done by this latest of Indian saints.

When your Secretary approached me with the request to read a paper on this occasion, I hesitated to accept the task, because I felt that the dominating materialism of my life, the incidents of my early training, the aggressive rationalism of my temperament, and lastly the nature of the subject all equally unfitted me as an exponent of Sri Ramakrishna's views. But I was prevailed upon to accept by the determination of your Secretary, and by my inborn sense of love and loyalty to the great and the holy; and thus it is, that with all my manifold imperfections you find me addressing you to-night.

I understand that this is the 7th or 8th celebration of Sri Ramakrishna's Birthday in Nagpur, and I therefore take the liberty to presume that the biographical details of his life, to a certain extent

at least, are well known to the public here. I would not therefore apologise for the very short and meagre sketch of his life, with which I propose to prefix the subject of this evening's discourse. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa Deva was born in the village of Kamarpukar, in the District of Hughli in Bengal on the 10th of Falgun 1756 of the Saka era, corresponding to the 20th of February 1834 A. D. His father Pandit Khudiram Chattopadhyaya was a cultured and religious-minded Brahman, and his mother Srimati Chandramani Devi has been described as "the very impersonation of kindness." The Paramahamsa was known as Gadadhar in his early childhood, and received some very elementary lessons in reading, writing and arithmetic. But he left the village school early; and under the orders of his father began to attend to the daily worship of his household deity "Raghbir." His first mystic experience came to him in his 11th year, when while going through the corn fields of Anur, a village near his home, he suddenly saw a vision of glory, and lost all sense-consciousness. People thought, it was a fainting fit, but as he told his disciples afterwards that it was his first experience of the state of Samadhi brought on by God-vision.

Young Gadadhar used to repeat the whole of the religious operas and dramas, the acting, the music and everything after hearing them only once. He had a very good musical voice, and a taste for music; and it is said that from his very early childhood the people of the village used to accept his judgment as final in the matter of the merits and defects of the images of Gods or Goddesses. He could draw and make images of Gods himself, and one of the broken stone images of Sri Krishna, which he repaired in later years may still be seen in Rani Rasmoni's temple at Dakshineswar, about four miles north of Calcutta.

The temple of the Goddess Kali at Dakshineswar was established in the year 1855, and the eldest brother of the Paramahamsa, Pandit Ramkumar Chattopadhyaya, a Brahmin Pandit of the old type was appointed to be the Chief Priest of the temple. After a few months when his brother became incapable of conducting the Puja owing to illness, Sri Ramakrishna was requested by his brother to take charge of the duties. This brought an eventful change in his life, for sincere as he

always was, he could do nothing from mere mercenary motives,' nor could he do anything in which he had no sincere faith. 'He now began to look upon the image as his mother, and the Mother of the Universe. He believed it to be living, and breathing, and taking food out of his hands. After doing the daily Puja he would sit for hours and hours singing hymns, talking and praying to the image till he would lose all sense-consciousness of the outer world.' When he was in such a frame of mind, public opinion about the young priest became divided, some thought that he was mad and some took him to be a great Bhakta. His mother and brothers proposed marriage as the best remedy under the circumstances, and accordingly he was married to a girl of six Stimati Saradamoni Devi, in the year 1859 when Ramakrishna was 25 years of age,

After his marriage he returned to his temple, but 'instead of toning down, his fervour and devotion increased a thousandfold. He saw strange visions of Divine Forms, and his whole soul became as it were, melted into one vast overflowing flood of tears; and he appealed to the Goddess to have mercy upon him and to reveal Herself to him. 'Mother, oh my mother,' 'Mother, O Mother,' these were the words which were day and night on his lips. The marriage hath been only in name. This human dispensation of his fate was of no avail, and when at the age of seventeen his wife who had been united by child marriage returned to him to know her fate, he told her that the Ramakrishna who had married her was dead, and that she was welcome to Ramakrishna the Sannyasi. 'He addressed her as his mother worshipped her with flowers and incense, because as he said he saw in her the image of the Goddess Kali. He asked her blessings as a child does from its mother, and then became lost in a deep trance.'

The wife who was fully worthy of such a husband, told him that she wanted nothing from him, but that he would teach her how to realise God, and allow her to cook his meals, and to do his Seva. She regarded her husband as an incarnation of the Deity, and was content to live a life of utmost purity advancing the mission of her husband's life. Here we may take leave of the biographical details of his life which has been summarised from the leading publications on this subject. Every Indian

understands what the life of a Sannyasin is. The ardent soul of Ramakrishna would not rest till perfection was reached, and the realisation of God in all His different aspects had been attained. He commenced the 12 years "Agnyata Tapasya," went through the eightfold methods prescribed by Patanjali in a short time, and under the direction of his teacher Totapuri, a Vedantic Sannyasi, he finally attained the Nirvikalpa stage of Samadhi where there is no longer any perception of the subject or the object. After this he would very frequently enter into the state of Samadhi, and remain for days together in such a condition; but what is more important for us to know is, that about this time his deep religious zeal took another turn. He began to practise and realise the Vaishnava ideal of love for God. So long his cry was 'Mother, O mother,' now we find the highest point of love is reached when the human soul can love his God as a wife loves her husband—the love which the fair maidens of 'Braja' had for our Lord Sri Krishna, or the love of Sri Radha and Sri Krishna—such love, took possession of his soul; such a vision of glory was attained when one day dressed as Radha, he fell into a trance, and saw the beautiful form of our Lord, and was satisfied. After having thus realised the vision of Sri Krishna, he likewise attempted to realise the ideals of Mohammedanism and Christianity. "Besides teaching the fact that *God may be seen*, his great object was to point out the essential harmony amongst all religions. He realised on the one hand the ideal set up by each of the various sects of the Hindu religion, on the other, the ideal of Islam and that of Christianity." His disciple M., who has written the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna bears testimony to the fact that "in solitude he recited the name of Allah, and meditated upon Christ Jesus. In a vision he saw Jesus in all his glory. In his chamber he made room for the pictures not only of Hindu Gods and Goddesses including Buddha, but also for that of Jesus Christ." "Sri Ramakrishna came to the conclusion that all religions are true, though each of them takes account of one aspect only of the "Akhanda Satchidananda" (i.e. the undivided and Eternal Existence, Knowledge and Bliss). Each of these different religions seemed to him a way to arrive at that One." (Max Muller).

Brothers, it is upon this conclusion, this Realisation of Mahatma Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa that the subject of this evening's discourse is based. What is meant by Universal Religion? It is a religion meant for every member of the Human Race irrespective of race, caste, colour or creed; irrespective of political relations that might exist between races, irrespective of their customs their history and their traditions. Universal Religion, Brothers, ignores the differences which divide, it transcends time, it heals up breaches, it binds in one golden chain of Love for all Humanity. Its realisation would mean ineffable Joy, its attainment endless Peace.

The religious crisis of to-day in our country rests on a combination of new scientific modes of thought with new social ideals, such as has never presented itself before. The former are summed up in the idea of Evolution, which is employed by the rationalistic minds of to-day for the foundation of that practical materialism which in social democratic circles has taken the place of the religious view of the world. This view is now opposed by a combination of the practically socialist tendency with the scientific modes of thought belonging to our time. How can we meet it? What can we do to preserve the ancient Sanatana Dharma of Bharatavarsha for our children and grand children, and to heal the breach which seems to have been formed with such incurable mischief between the undying and ineradicable religious needs of the human heart and man's modern thought? The more impartially we contemplate the present difficulty, the more clearly we endeavour to recognise its causes, the more convinced shall we be, that the very circumstances and tendencies which are responsible for the prevailing Adharma of our people, implicitly contain the forces of resistance and of cure, which will bring to light, with the aid of the ancient Hindu spirit a new development of our ancient religion, and of the moral life of the Hindu society, and finally through the Hindu society of the rest of the world.

Believe me, gentlemen, this last is no idle boast. It is the very Dispensation of Providence, the verdict of all history. The world-religions are of Asia, the missionaries of the world-religions were all Asiatics; and I feel as sure of the moral upheaval and reconstruction of the world through

the agency of India, as I feel sure of the earth on which I am standing, or the light of the sun which beats upon my face. I apologise to you for this digression, but I felt it with the dynamic force of the Inevitable, and I have told you what I have always felt.

To resume the thread of our thought—thus much at any rate is certain,—that nothing could be more futile, nothing more perverse, than the renewed attempts of short-sighted and narrow-minded men to suppress the scientific thought of the present day, or, at any rate, wherever it comes into collision with traditional and theological doctrines of the Hindus, to refuse to grant it any justification whatsoever; and to pour unavailing ridicule upon it or by attempting to reconcile them by offering fanciful explanations.

Equally condemnable is the lofty sneer of the scientific men, who claim a victory for the materialistic interpretation of human history. The instinct of the nations refuses to be talked out of its reverence for great and holy personalities, and the heart of the Hindu nation will not most certainly allow itself to be robbed of its noblest possession viz., its pious faith in the inspired words of the Holy Rishis or the Divine utterances of its Avatars. No amount of science will wash this faith out of our hearts. It is the *sine qua non* of our national existence, the one inalienable quality of the Hindu soul.

I have said before that the cure for the prevailing evils will be found in the circumstances and tendencies of the present. Some of you gentlemen should have heard of the latest medical cure by means of the injection of an antotoxin in the system. It is the cure of a disease by the injection of a toxic serum prepared from one's own diseased blood. In fact it is the allopathic recognition of the homeopathic principle of, "similia similibus curantur." In my humble judgment for the cure of the existing evils in our society, we should resort to a treatment based on this medical principle. We should apply no fragrant healing balm which satisfies our sense of vanity, nor resort to flavoured drugs which can be easily swallowed. We should rather inject the mind of the Hindu races with truths imparted to us by divinely gifted men of our present decadent age. We should draw inspiration not so much from the past as from the

present. Just as in the past the Avatars Buddha, Sankara, Chaitanya and others saved the Hindu society, so likewise in the present the wisdom of modern Rishis like Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and others would save it. Their ideas represent the antitoxic serum which would cure the evils of the present age. Whether in religious or secular history it is only the inborn genius, this mysterious divine power in man whose ultimate source lies in "the Father of all spirits" which can solve the problems of its time and achieve the salvation of all. I do not believe, gentlemen, that the moral and religious salvation of a people was founded on external circumstances. It most of all depends on the hearts of men, and thus we see that the great Avatars commenced their work of saving with the summons to repentance and the moral and religious education of individuals by word and example.

The signs of the times, therefore, and the present religious crisis thus point to one result, viz., that Hinduism must be relieved of its formalising bonds so as to enable its ethical leavening power to advance with greater freedom and greater might for the welfare not only of individual souls, not only of the vast Hindu community, but also for the vaster common social life of the whole world. This I believe was in essence the teaching of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda.

"O God in every temple I see people that see thee, and in every language I hear spoken, people praise thee.

"Each religion says 'Thou art one without equal.'

"If it be a mosque people murmur the holy prayer, and if it be a Christian Church people ring the bell from love to Thee.

"Sometimes I frequent the Christian cloister, sometimes the Hindu temple, and sometimes the Moslem mosque.

"But it is Thou whom I search from Temple to Temple.

"Thy elect have no dealings with either heresy or orthodoxy.

"Heresy to the heretic and religion to the orthodox.

"But the dust of the rose petal belongs to the heart of the perfume seller."

(Tennyson's Dream of Akbar.)

PROF. K. C. CHATTERJI, M. A.

IS SHAKTI FORCE?

(*From the Commonwealth.*)

There are some persons who have thought, and still think, that Shakti means force and that the worship of Shakti is the worship of force. Thus Keshub Chunder Sen (*New Dispensation*, p. 108), wrote :

"Four centuries ago the Shaktas gave way before the Bhaktas. Chaitanya's army proved invincible, and carried all Bengal captive. Even to-day his gospel of love rules as a living force, though his followers have considerably declined both in faith and in morals. Just the reverse of this we find in England and other European countries. There the Shaktas are driving the Bhaktas out of the field. Look at the Huxleys, the Tyndalls and the Spencers of the day. What are they but Shaktas, worshippers of Shakti or Force? The only Deity they adore, if they at all adore one, is the Prime Force of the universe. To it they offer dry homage. Surely then the scientists and the materialists of the day are a sect of Shakti-worshippers, who are chasing away the true Christian devotees who adore the God of Love. Alas! for European Vaishnavas! They are retreating before the advancing millions of Western Shaktas. We sincerely trust, however, the discomfiture of devotion and Bhakti will be only for a time, and that a Chaitanya will yet arise in the West, crush the Shaktas, who only recognise Force as deity and are sunk in carnality and voluptuousness, and lead natures into the loving faith, spirituality, simplicity, and rapturous devotion of the Vaishnava."

Professor Monier Williams (*Hinduism*) also called it a doctrine of Force.

Recently the poet Rabindranath Tagore has given the authority of his great name to this error (*Modern Review*, July, 1919). After pointing out that Egoism is the price paid for the fact of existence and that the whole universe is assisting in the desire that the "I" should be, he says that man has viewed this desire in two different ways, either as a whim of Creative Power, or a joyous self-expression of Creative Love. Is the fact then of his *being*, he asks, a revealment of Force or of Love? Those who hold to the first view must also,

he thinks, recognise conflict as inevitable and eternal. For according to them Peace and Love are but a precarious coat of armour within which the weak seek shelter, whereas that which the timid anathematise as unrighteousness, that alone is the road to success. "The pride of prosperity throws man's mind outwards and the misery and insult of destitution draws man's hungering desires likewise, outwards. These two conditions alike leave man unashamed to place above all other gods, Shakti the Deity of Power—the Cruel One, whose right hand wields the weapon of wrong and whose left the weapon of guile. In the politics of Europe drunk with Power we see the worship of Shakti."

In the same way the poet says that in the days of their political disruption the cowed and down-trodden Indian people through the mouths of their poets sang the praises of the same Shakti. "The Chandi of Kavikankana and of the Annadhamangal, the Ballad of Manasa, the Goddess of Snakes, what are they but Paeans of the triumph of Evil? The burden of their song is the defeat of Shiva the good at the hands of the cruel deceitful criminal Shakti." "The male Deity who was in possession was fairly harmless. But all of a sudden a feminine Deity turns up and demands to be worshipped in his stead. That is to say that she insisted on thrusting herself where she had no right. Under what title? Force! By what method? Any that would serve."

The Deity of peace and renunciation did not survive. Thus he adds that in Europe the modern Cult of Shakti says that the pale anaemic Jesus will not do. But with high pomp and activity Europe celebrates her Shakti worship.

"Lastly the Indians of to-day have set to the worship of Europe's Divinity. In the name of religion some are saying that it is cowardly to be afraid of wrong-doing. Both those who have attained worldly success, and those who have failed to attain it are singing the same tune. Both fret at righteousness as an obstacle which both would overcome by physical force." I am not concerned here with any popular errors that there may be. After all, when we deal with a Shastraic term it is to the Shastra itself that we must look for its meaning. Shakti comes from the root *Shak* "to be able," "to do." It indicates both activity and

capacity therefore. The world, as world, is activity. But when we have said that, we have already indicated that it is erroneous to confine the meaning of the term Shakti to any special form of activity. On the contrary Shakti means both power in general and every particular form of power. Mind is a Power: so is Matter: Mind is constantly functioning in the form of *Vritti*. Reasoning, Will and Feeling (*Bhava*) such as love, aversion, and so forth are all aspects of Mind-power in its general sense. Force is power translated to the material plane, and is therefore only one and the grossest aspect of Shakti or Power. But all these special powers¹ are limited forms of the great creative Power which is the Mother (*Ambika*) of the Universe. Worship of Shakti is not worship of these limited forms, but of the Divine will, knowledge and action, the cause of these effects. That Mahashakti is perfect consciousness (*Chidrupini*) and Bliss (*Anandamayi*) which produces from itself the contracted consciousness experiencing both pleasure and pain. This production is not at all a "whim." It is the nature (*Svabhava*) of the ultimate.

Bliss is love (*Niratishayapremaspadatvam*, *Anandatvam*). The production of the Universe is an act of love, illustrated by the so-called erotic imagery of the Shastra. The Self loves itself whether before, or in, creation. The thrill of human love which continues the life of humanity is an infinitesimally small fragment and faint reflection of the creative act in which Shiva and Shakti join to produce the Bindu which is the seed of the Universe.

I quite agree that the worship of mere Force is asuric and except in a transient sense futile. To worship force merely is to worship matter. He however who worships the Mother in Her Material forms (*Sthularupa*) will know that She has others, and will worship Her in all such forms. He will also know that she is beyond all limited forms as that which gives being to them all. We may then say that Force is a gross form of Shakti, but Shakti is much more than that "here" (*iha*), and the infinite Power of Consciousness "there" (*amutra*). This last, the Shakti of worship, is called by the Shastra the *Purnahambhava* or the experience "All I am."

THE VISION OF LIFE.

A wild, fantastic, fitful vision
Flowing in an endless stream,
Ever changing, ever broadening
The airy substance of the life of dream.

The smiles, that in the celestial dimples live,
Toned down by sobs of a mysterious woe,
On the cradle did shine—a cheering light
Of thousand hues, a veritable rainbow.

Lo ! now no more ! The scene hath changed !
Down from the cradle the babe descends
To charm all by its angelic grace,
Its voice the eternal Beyond to paint pretends.

But, like a lightning, that sends its blazing streak
To fringe for a while the skirts of a murky cloud
And swiftly withdraws, leaving a double gloom,
The smile, the lisp, creep beneath a lurid shroud.

A boy of sportive freaks and fancies wild
Emerge ; colours bright animate his soul :
The blazing orbs, the coloured bow
Beyond his reach ; in the leafy dale to stroll
His chief delight, to catch a painted fly
Or a bird, that tempts his wondering mind
With all that is rich and bright, and a son'rous cry.

The boy too steals into the shroud of the past,
As soon doth wan Time mise his magic wand.
No longer rises the shrilling cry to join
The siren songs of the wooded land.

A youth with heaved breast is whistling his way
Unmindful of the path he treads. A land
Of romance his abode, where fragrant spray
Of faery founts in thousand colours glow,
Where the moon never sets, and the azure deep
With all its spangles ever doth show
A living wonder. Blossoms of countless hues,
That richly paint the vernal year,
Weave with emerald leaves a garment loose
For nature dear. Here he lives and drinks

The nectar, that green-eyed Hope
Pours from a vase of saphire. Smiles and winks
Play on his blooming face, when he fondles
His playmate Love. Anon the scene sinks
Into the grave of the past.

The same figure now
On a frail boat doth ride the tempestuous deep,
A haggard lines of care on his brow.
Gloom has piled on gloom on the dreary sky
And on the bosom of the deep. Thund'ring waves
Lash to make a frantic dance, on which both ply
The sol'tary boat : the helm and the rudder held
By spectres wild—Passions their name.
With each breath he draws, he sees the face
Of grim Death revelling in his cruel game.
Visions of the past slowly rise and dance
A wild measure before his bewildered gaze—
A contempt in their face, a mock in every glance.
The dear companions of life's sojourn—
Name, fame, lucre and fondlings of love,
That held him so fast to life's concern.
Melt into airy nothing. The boat is sunk,
The spirit fled.

But where ? Perchance
To come again and play another game.
From birth to death and death to birth he goes,
Much like a stringed stone, that about the fist
Makes ceaseless whirls, ever shifting
Though seemingly at rest. Snap off the string
Off will fly the stone, the whirling cease.
Desire—the string that binds us mortals
To whirl in the dreamy path of births and decays.
Snap off the cord and lo ! the magic re'l'm
Of time and space with all its visions wild
Will fade before the blazing soul.
No more thy birth ! Growth and decay
Are absurd things ! Changeless thou art,
The whole past an oblivious dream.
Consciousness and bliss eternal
The only truth, and thou art That.

S. N. M.

VIVEKACHUDAMANI

(Continued from page 188.)

तस्मादहङ्कारमिमं स्वशब्दं
भोक्तुर्गते कण्ठकथत्प्रतीतम् ।

विच्छिद्य विज्ञानमहासिना स्फुर्तं
भुद्भवात्मसाम्राज्यसुखं यथेष्टम् ३०७॥

307. Therefore, destroying this Egoism, thy enemy,—which appears like a thorn sticking in the throat of one taking his meal—through the great sword of Realisation, enjoy directly and freely the bliss of thy own empire, the majesty of the Atman.

[Great sword—Mahdsi. The phrase, as it is, is applicable to only one side of the comparison, namely, 'the enemy,' but not to 'the thorn,' for which it should be interpreted to mean 'a sharp knife.]

ततोऽहमादेविनिवर्त्य बृत्ति
संत्यक्तरागः परमार्थलाभात् ।

तूष्णीं समास्स्वात्मसुखानुभूत्या
पूर्णात्मना ब्रह्मणि निर्विकल्पः ॥३०८॥

308. Therefore, checking the activities of Egoism etc., and giving up all attachment through the realisation of the Supreme Reality, be free from all duality through the enjoyment of the Bliss of Self, and remain quiet in the Brahman, for thou hast attained thy infinite nature.

[Egoism etc.—Egoism with its two forms, 'I' and 'mine.]

समूलकृत्तोऽपि महानहं पुन-
व्युत्खेतिः स्याद्यदि चेतसा चण्णम् ।
संजीव्य विक्षेपशतं करोति
नभस्वता प्रावृषि वारिदो यथा ॥३०९॥

309. Even though completely rooted out, this terrible Egoism, if revolved in the mind for a moment only, returns to life and creates hundreds of mischiefs, like a cloud ushered in by the wind during the rainy season.

निगृह्य शत्रोरहमोऽवकाशः
क्वचिच्च देयो विषयानुचिन्तया ।
स एव संजीवनंहतुरस्य
प्रक्षीणाजम्बीरतरोरिचाम्बु ॥३१०॥

310. Overpowering this enemy, Egoism, not a moment's respite should be given to it by thinking on sense-objects. That is verily the cause of its coming back to life, like water to a citron tree that has almost dried up.

देहात्मना संस्थित एव कामी
विलक्षणाः कामयिता कथं स्यात् ।
अतोऽर्थसन्धानपरत्वमेव
भेदप्रसक्त्या भवयन्नहेतुः ॥३११॥

311. He alone who has identified himself with the body is greedy after sense-pleasures. How can one devoid of body-idea be greedy (like him)? Hence the tendency to think on sense-objects is verily the cause of the bondage of transmigration, giving rise to an idea of distinction or duality.

कार्यप्रवर्द्धनाद्रीजप्रवृद्धिः परिवृश्यते ॥
कार्यनाशाद्रीजनाशस्तस्मात्कार्ये निरोधयेत् ॥३१२॥

312. When the effects are developed, the seed is also observed to be such, and when the effects are destroyed the seed also is seen to be destroyed. Therefore one must subdue the effects.

[Effects—actions done with selfish motives.
Seed—desire for sense-pleasures.]

The next Sloka explains this.]

वासनावृद्धितः कार्यं कार्यवृद्ध्या च वासना ।
वर्द्धते सर्वथा पुंसः संसारो न निवर्तते ॥३१३॥

313. Through the increase of desires selfish work increases, and when there is an increase of selfish work there is always an

increase of desire also. And man's transmigration is never at an end.

संसारवन्धविच्छ्रृण्य तद् दयं प्रदहेयति ।

वासनावृद्धिरेताऽयां चिन्तया क्रियया वहिः ॥३१४॥

314. For the sake of breaking the chain of transmigration the Sannyasin should burn to ashes those two for by thinking of sense-objects and doing selfish acts lead to an increase of desires.

ताऽयां प्रवर्जमाना सा सूते संसृतिमात्मनः ।

चयाणां च च्योपायः सर्वावस्यासु सर्वदा ॥३१५॥

सर्वत्र सर्वतः सर्वव्याप्तावलोकनैः ।

सज्जाववासनादार्ढ्यात्तत्रयं लयमश्नुते ॥३१६॥

315-6. Augmented by these two, desires produce one's transmigration. The way to destroy these three, however, lies in looking upon everything, under all circumstances, always, everywhere and in all respects, as Brahman and Brahman alone. Through the strengthening of the longing to be one with Brahman those three are annihilated.

[*These three—selfish work, dwelling on sense-objects and sense-hankering for them. The next Sloka gives the steps to realisation.*]

क्रियानारो भवेच्चिन्तानाशोऽस्माद्वासनाक्षयः ।

वासनाप्रक्षयो मोक्षः सा जीवन्मुक्तिरिष्यते ॥३१७॥

317. With the cessation of selfish action the brooding on sense-objects is stopped, which is followed by the destruction of desires. The destruction of desires is Liberation, and this is considered as Liberation-in-life.

सद्वासनास्फूर्तिविजृम्भणे स-

खसौ विलिनाप्यहमादिवासना ।

अतिप्रकृष्टाप्यरुणप्रभायां

विरीयते साधु यथा तमित्ता ॥३१८॥

318. When the desire for realising the Brahman has a marked manifestation the egoistic desires readily vanish, as the most

intense darkness effectively vanishes before the glow of the rising sun.

तमस्तमःकार्यमनर्थजालं

न हश्यते सत्युदिते दिनेषो ।

तथाऽङ्ग्यानन्दरसानुभूतौ

न वास्ति वन्धो न च दुःखगन्धः ॥३१९॥

319. Darkness and the numerous evils that attend on it are not noticed when the sun rises. Similarly on the realisation of the Bliss-Absolute there is neither bondage nor the least trace of misery.

हश्यं प्रतीतं प्रविलापयन्मन्

सन्मात्रमानन्दघनं विभावयन् ।

समाहितः सन्वहिरन्तरं वा

कालं नयेथाः सति कर्मवन्धे ॥४२०॥

320. Causing the external and internal universes which are now perceived to vanish and meditating on the Reality, the Bliss Embodied, one should pass his time watchfully, if there be any residue of Prârabdha work left.

[*External and internal universes—the worlds of matter and thought. The former exists outside of man, whereas the latter he himself creates by the power of thought.*]

Causing.....to vanish—through the eliminating process, 'Neti, Neti'—Brahman is not this, not that, etc.]

प्रमादो ब्रह्मनिष्ठायां न कर्तव्यः कदाचन

प्रमादो मृत्युरित्याह भगवानब्रह्मणः सुतः ॥३२१॥

321. One should never be careless in one's steadfastness to Brahman. Bhagavan Sanatkumara, who is Brahmâ's son, has called inadvertence to be death itself.

[*Sanatkumara &c.—In the celebrated Sanat-sujâta-Samvâda (chapters 40-45, *Udyoga Parva*, *Mahabharata*)—the conversation between Sanatkumara and King Dhritarâshtra—there occur words like the following—प्रमादं वै मृत्युमहं ब्रवीमि—“I call inadvertence itself as death,” &c.*]

Brahma's son—and therefore a high authority on spiritual matters.]

(To be continued.)

REVIEWS.

Why not a League of Religions? by Kate Simmons.

We have received a very sensible paper by Kate Simmons on "Why not a League of Religions?" The idea of the paper is the establishment of a spiritual unity among man, by a unification or harmony between the different religious faiths of the world as the necessary precondition of all harmony or league in the national lives. The idea of a "Universal Religion" has long been in the air and we are glad to find the author takes the only sensible view of it, viz., that it does not mean the predominance of one particular type of religion to the suppression of all others, but the summation of all with the perception of the underlying unity in infinite variety; and that the varieties of religious beliefs are only the different adaptations of the one Truth to men "endowed with diversities of gifts, and at varying stages of development." As the Swami Vivekananda said in the Chicago Parliament of Religions, 1893....."if there is ever to be a universal religion it must be one which will have no location in place or time which will be infinite, like the God it will preach, and whose sun will shine upon the followers of Krishna and of Christ, on saints and sinners alike; which will not be Brâhmanic or Buddhistic, Christian or Mahomedan, but the sum-total of all these, and still have infinite space for development; which in its catholicity will embrace in its infinite arms, and find a place for, every human being, from the lowest grovelling savage not far removed from the brute, to the highest man towering by the virtues of his head and heart almost above humanity, making society stand in awe of him and doubt his human nature."

Space forbids us to quote from the paper, at length, but let us conclude by saying that real harmony between religious faiths will be attained by recognising, as the writer points out, the divine origin of man which exists in some form or other in all religions and which Vedanta has so forcibly emphasised.

Footsteps of Freedom,—Essays by J. H. Cousins.
Published by Ganesh & Co., Madras.

A collection of essays written in a clear, fascinating style and form excellent literary pieces. The first portion depicts the steps which Freedom has taken in broadening out as enshrined in the songs and writings of the English poets and thinkers, what new conception and direction has been given to it by each poet and thinker and he passes under review the poems and writings of Dante, Burke, Shelly, J. S. Mill, Whitman, Henry Bryan, Binns and Jush Bards and Ballad makers, bringing out what contribution each has made to the idea of Freedom and what statement and garb has been given to it. The second portion consists of miscellaneous essays on different subjects, such as Religious Unity, Culture and Training in Education, Science and Art of co-operation, Psychical Research and Religious thought etc., which are thought-provoking and original in thought, presentment, and outlook of consideration. The author very often brings the Hindu Vedantic viewpoint to bear upon the consideration of the questions he discusses.

NEWS AND NOTES.

SWAMI Paramananda of Vedanta Centre, Boston, has been carrying on the work of preaching and propagating the message of Vedanta in different cities of America very successfully. Lately he visited Louisville, Kentucky Gallup, New Mexica, and on the invitation of Dr. Guthrie, Rector of St. Mark, spoke at the St. Mark in-the-Bouwerie. Everywhere his presence roused interest in the Vedanta and his expositions were much appreciated. We quote from one of the reports we have received :—

On Sunday afternoon, February 9th, at St. Mark's in-the-Bouwerie, one of the unique afternoons, that have become a regular institution in New York, was devoted to "The Far and the Near East," with the connotation of Arabia, Persia, India and China. After a service in the Church, based on twenty-one special theophanies chosen from the Old Testament, and leading up to the Christian ideal of the Divine Incarnation, the Rector, William Norman Guthrie, explained the purpose of the afternoon, which was to transport us in spirit to the top of the Mount of the Lord,

and give us a Pisgah view then, as it were, of the great land of mystery whence the Occident has drawn so much of its inspiration.

By way then of presenting Persia, he himself read with commentary two poems of Rumi, the great Sufi, and three poetic prayers of Baha Ula, striking the chief note of the Bahai movement. Adjournment was then taken to St. Mark's Hall, on the walls of which were hung pictures by Khalil Gibran, born on Mount Lebanon, and the most distinguished Arabic poet of our day. There were also hung three ancient Chinese paintings selected and lent by Abel William Bahr, and the explanation of their religious significance was given in his absence by the Rector. Then Khalil Gibran read a number of his poems from "The Madman" and his forthcoming "The Prophet" that had a very singular quality, uniting the most tense religious earnestness, spiritual elevation, together with wit and humor.

After Mr. Gibran concluded, Swami Paramananda, the founder of the Vedanta Centre of Boston, arose and calmly spoke on the genius of mystic poetry in India, captivating all, even those who may have come with some degree of prejudice against his special message. He struck and held the universal note in an Oriental way, which had been struck in the Church in an Occidental way. Mr. Guthrie made every one realise the equivalence of the variety of religious experiences, basic to the various revelations; but he emphasized the previous interest in the difference. The Swami winsomely and sagaciously indicated the great preciousness of the permeating sense of unity, of identity. His use of typical Indian chants imparted a certain mystic solemnity to the meeting, and one felt that he had closed the programme with a truly catholic benediction, under the beautiful Della Robbia Annunciation, before which nine candles were lit, in a manner that will make the afternoon ever memorable to all those who had the good fortune to participate.

AN interesting little function was celebrated on the morning of Sunday, the 3rd August 1919, when the Sri Ramakrishna Students' Home for poor students of the City was opened. His Holiness Swami Nirmalanandaji presided. The friends and admirers of the Mission and its workers had gathered in large numbers. The function began with a procession of the photos of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and the Swami Vivekananda and Swami Ramakrishnananda from the premises of the Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama to the Home building situated, happily, just in front of the Ashrama on the other side of the road. The objects and aims of the Committee responsible for the Home were explained by Messrs. V. Gopalaswamiengar M.A. and M. A. Narayana Iyengar, Excise Commissioner.

Liberal promises of donation were made on the spot. Mr. Pasupati Iyer, a leading cloth merchant, promised a contribution of Rs. Five hundred, while Mr. S. K. Narasimhaiah and another high officer of Government promised to maintain each a student in honour of the birth of a son to His Highness the Yuvaraja of Mysore.

The Students' home begins with nine students, and it is a special feature of the Home that it is open to Brahmins and non-Brahmins, alike.

His Holiness the Swami Nirmalanandaji explained to the audience that Sri Ramakrishna stood for no particular mission or cult, and in a few well-chosen words the Swamiji explained the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and their bearing on Hindu Religion.

WE have received the following report of the Ramakrishna Mission Famine Relief Work in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, for the month of July:

Through the charitable grants of the public, generous and benevolent, we are maintaining our relief activities in different districts for the last eight months, and the work must be continued for the next two months more before relief operation may be closed. The recent monsoon-rain was well utilised by all the districts, but Tippera and Manbhum suffered for shortage of rain for which they had to wait for transplantation, and the plants that grew early suffered heavily. Again the heavy storm that visited the district of Manbhum recently destroyed almost the whole of the maze cultivation. Due to these causes the period of our helping operation is to be extended to two months more. From 14 centres in different parts of Bengal and Orissa, a total of 782 mds. of rice were distributed to 246 villages in the month of July.

All contributions to be sent to the following addresses:

- (1) The President, R. K. Mission, Belur, Howrah.
- (2) The Secretary, R. K. Mission, Udbodhan Office, Calcutta.

THE monthly report of the R. K. Mission Sevashrama, Kankhal, shows the number of Indoor patients:—2 old cases and 45 admitted new, 23 discharged cured, 1 died, 7 left treatment and 16 still in the Sevashrama. Outdoor patients:—2873 cases of which 1363 new and 1510 repeated numbers.

Last month's balance	Rs.	... 8460-6-3
Total Receipts	"	... 905-9-9
Total	"	... 9366-0-0
Total Disbursements	"	... 240-12-9
Balance in hand	"	... 9125-3-3